

Presented

BROOKLINE TAVERNS
by Gorham Dana

It is a far cry from the old Brookline taverns of colonial days to the many attractive hotels of today - more especially the two larger ones: The Beaconsfield on Beacon Street, built in 1895, and Longwood Towers on Chapel Street, built in 1926, and originally called Alden Park Manor. But the old taverns were perhaps as notable in their day as the modern hotels are today.

Brookline in colonial days was the principal entrance to Boston from the west and north. The old Sherburne Road, (now Walnut Street) and Heath Street brought the bulk of the travel from New York and the west to Punch Bowl Village, (now called Brookline Village) while Washington Street and College Road (now called Harvard Street) brought the traffic from Brighton, Cambridge and beyond to the same centre. From here it crossed Muddy River on a small bridge on the site of the present inconspicuous bridge close to the overpass, to the old road on the Roxbury side, now called Huntington Avenue, and continuing by way of Parker Hill and Roxbury Crossing to the centre of Boston. In the early days the three ^{principal} Brookline taverns were all located on well-traveled through roads: the Punch Bowl, in what is now Brookline Village, the Dana Tavern, in Harvard Square at the junction of Washington and Harvard Streets, and the Richards Tavern, in the Chestnut Hill section on Sherburne Road (now Heath Street) where Hammond Street now crosses it.

PUNCH BOWL TAVERN

This famous tavern on the east side of Washington Street in Brookline Village was built in 1717 as a dwelling house by James Goddard. Being in a strategic location for catering to the travelers going to Boston, it was enlarged by John Ellis and converted into a tavern which for nearly one hundred years was a famous stopping place for

travelers. After John Ellis, the proprietors were William Whitney, Eleazer Baker, Eliphalet Spurr, and William Laughton. Then followed in 1820 Franklin Gerry, in 1826 Louis Boutell, and in 1827 William Jenerson. As new facilities for travel came into use and the old stage coaches became obsolete, the need for a tavern in Brookline Village gradually diminished and the old tavern was torn down in 1833.

The original building was a modest two-story hipped roof house in which Mr. Goddard lived several years. In 1740 John Ellis, the second owner, realized the need of a tavern in the neighborhood and started enlarging the house and using it as a public tavern. A number of old houses were moved to adjoin the original building and, according to Miss Harriet Wood, "making a curious medley of old rooms of all sorts and sizes connected together in a nondescript manner and presenting an architectural style which we might call a conglomerate." This structure and the necessary out-buildings finally occupied a street front of several hundred feet extending from the present theatre ^{to} beyond Pearl Street nearly to Brookline Avenue. A bench extending along the street front under the eaves offered a convenient resting place for the neighbors to congregate, swap yarns, and watch the great events of the day: the arrival of the New York and Uxbridge stages. There were large trees at each end of the main building and an old pump in front. The famous Punch Bowl sign hung from a high red post at the left of the building, and on this was pictured an overflowing punch bowl with ladle, under a lemon tree with lemons lying on the ground, below. A lemon tree in cold New England seems a bit incongruous, but it made rather a pretty picture. Inside the tavern was a ball room, a large dining-room and, as in all taverns, a popular tap room.

There was heavy traffic through Punch Bowl Village at that time as there was no railway or street cars,, and all the traffic to Boston from the north and west was by wagon or stage coach passing along this route in front of the tavern. It was not uncommon to find a line of waiting vehicles extending from what is now Kent Street (then Harrison Place) to Brookline Avenue. A brook at the present railroad crossing supplied water for the horses, and the tavern tap room supplied stronger liquid refreshment for the travelers. The slogan of the old tavern, "We offer refreshment for man and beast" was well chosen. It was many years before the Mill Dam (Brookline Avenue) and Huntington Avenue were built.

Besides the traveling public, the tavern was popular for dances and balls. The belles of Boston, accompanied by the beaubrums or by British officers (before the Revolution), would drive out from Boston to enjoy the hospitality of the famous tavern. It was also a favorite meeting-place for Brookline citizens, for here the old volunteer fire companies would meet and argue about their by-laws which were frequently being changed. Here also the town officials held dinners and receptions. Many of the selectmen's meetings were held in the tavern, preceded by a sumptuous dinner. At least one of the proprietors was on the Board of Selectmen. After one of the meetings the tavern caught fire, probably from a soiled table cloth having been stuffed into a closet rather too hastily. It was a bitterly cold night, but the alert proprietor was awakened and rushed downstairs in his night clothes. He extinguished the fire by throwing on a pail of garbage, - the only fire extinguisher that was handy.

The story is also told of a notable occasion at the Tavern in 1783 when Selectman Joshua Boylston, a nephew of the famous Dr. Zabdiel Boylston who first introduced inoculation for small pox into this

country, attended a selectmen's dinner here. He was rather a reserved and stern man of about 55 years who had never married. Squire Sharp, the town clerk and also a bachelor, was present, and there was some bantering directed toward the two bachelors regarding marriage. When asked why he had never married, Selectman Boylston replied that he had never found any one who would take him. Abigail Baker, sister of the landlord of the inn, a cheerful trim little body of about 40 years, was waiting on table, and to the astonishment of the company remarked, "I will have you, Mr. Boylston." "Squire Sharp", said Boylston, "do you hear that? Publish the banns next Sunday." When he found that the banns had not been published he asked the Squire why. "I thought it was all a joke", replied the clerk. "Publish them next week or I will prosecute", he was told by the irate selectman. This was done, and they were married and apparently lived happily ever after.

It is interesting to note in the Curtis history of Brookline, published by the Historical Society ^{that} on April 19, 1776, ~~that~~ the British troops that had gone by boat across the Charles River to East Cambridge and thence to Lexington had met with resistance and called for reinforcements. Lord Percy was sent to their aid and marched his detachment over Boston neck up ^{the} hill by the Roxbury meeting-house, over Parker Hill, into and through Punch Bowl Village on the way to Lexington. The habitues of Punch Bowl Tavern must have found this an exciting event, long to be remembered.

In due course the British troops were withdrawn, the War of the Revolution was won, and the old tavern returned to its peaceful life. But conditions gradually changed and the stage coach gave way to new methods of transportation. The need for a tavern in Brookline ^{Village} gradually disappeared, and the old Punch Bowl was torn down in 1833.

On the site was soon built a large frame building with stores on the first floor and called Lyceum Hall. This hall was famous for Lyceum lectures so popular at that time ^{Amongst the speakers were} and for various other meetings. It was torn down in 1937... to make room for the present block of modern stores and the Brookline Theatre.

In 1949 the Historical Society appointed a committee of three, consisting of Daniel G. Lacy, James M. Driscoll, and Miss Elizabeth Burrage to arrange for a bronze tablet to be placed on the site of Punch Bowl Tavern. They decided that the proper location was on the Brookline Theatre just south of the main entrance. Mr. Lacy soon gained the enthusiastic consent of the owner, Mr. Morris Sharaff, and the tablet was cast following the design made by Mr. Arthur Spooner of the Brookline Engineering Department.

On November 19, 1949 the tablet was unveiled by President Bertram K. Little of the Historical Society before a group of about 25 members. An address was made by Mrs. Sharaff, who spoke inspiringly of the importance of such reminders of the past, and stating, "Let us try to outmatch the strength of former links in the long chain of American destiny and avoid their weaknesses". *Gorham Dana, Clerk, added a brief historical sketch*

The wording of the tablet is as follows:

On this site stood the Punch Bowl Tavern.
Built as a dwelling by James Goddard in 1717.
It was enlarged by John Ellis in 1740 and was
for nearly a century a famous tavern frequented
by travellers between Boston and the West.

Erected by the Brookline Historical Society in 1949.

Thus ends the history of Brookline's most famous tavern.

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DANA TAVERN

This old tavern was located at the junction of Harvard and Washington Streets at Harvard Square. The building, of which no picture now remains, was a large gambler-roofed structure with out-buildings, and covered a large area, taking much of the land between those streets for a considerable distance back from Harvard Square. It was not as famous as the Punch Bowl Tavern, as it had no ball room, and catered mostly to out of town produce dealers. The only hay scales in town at that time were in front of the building.

Jonathan Dana, the proprietor, was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1736 and died in Brookline in 1812. He was a great grandson of Richard Dana who came to Cambridge about 1640 and was progenitor of the Dana family in America. Jonathan descended through Benjamin and his father, William. Jonathan married three times: the first in 1762 to Hannah White of Brookline who was the daughter of Moses and Rachel Davis White. She died in 1794, and in 1797 he married Elizabeth Shedd of Roxbury. She died two years later, and in 1806 he married Fanny Parmenter of Sudbury who died in 1809. He had twelve children in all, three of whom died in infancy. Only two sons grew to maturity and neither apparently married. Some of the family later moved to West Lubeck, Maine.

An amusing story is told of one Thomas Cook, a notorious thief well-known in town and noted for several eccentricities, among which was that of stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. For this he was imprisoned frequently in Fort Independence in Boston Harbor. He once stole a goose from a countryman's wagon stored under a shed at the Dana Tavern. This he took to the old schoolhouse on School Street and started to cook it. Squire Sharp, a justice of the peace, and a school committee member, lived nearby and saw the smoke coming from the schoolhouse. He rushed over and caught the thief red-handed.

Cook confessed that he had stolen the goose from the owner's cart at the Dana Tavern. The squire marched him back to the tap-room of the Tavern where he discussed the case with those present and gave the culprit the choice of a public whipping or a trial with almost certain imprisonment in the Fort. Cook, who had a keen memory of the Fort, chose the whipping which was administered then and there. After that he had little appetite for the goose.

Jonathan was a rather prominent citizen in town and held several public offices, including collector of taxes (1778-9), constable, and clerk of market. He apparently stood well with the selectmen as some of their meetings were held at his tavern. He operated the tavern till his death in 1812, and it was continued by his family till 1816 when it was destroyed by fire. At that fire it is reported that Ben Bradley, a notable Brookline character described in an article by the writer in the Proceedings of this Society for 1950, saw the fire and rushed down from his home on Bradley Hill. He placed a ladder against the burning building and rescued a woman and a child.

The tavern was never rebuilt after the fire, and the land remained idle till 1825 when it was bought by the Baptists. They erected a chapel which was later replaced by the large church with the tall spire containing the town clock. When the Baptists moved to their fine new stone church at Coolidge Corner they sold the old church to the Presbyterians who still occupy it.

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RICHARDS TAVERN

This tavern stood on the northeast corner of what is now Heath Street and Hammond Street at Chestnut Hill. It was built about 1770 by Elhanan Winchester with the aid of the "New Lights", as the followers of the 17th century revivalist, George Whitfield, were called. It was a large house with a good-sized room on the first floor where their New Light meetings were held. Unlike most houses of that time, there were four chimneys - one at each corner instead of the usual single chimney in the center. The main door opened on Sherburne Road (now Heath Street), the "Great Road" so-called, along which the post riders and coaches from Boston passed on their six days' journey to New York.

In this house was born the Rev. Elhanan Winchester, Jr., a leader in the Baptist denomination. He became famous as a Baptist preacher throughout New England and in the South. He converted his father of the same name who was then a member of the First Parish in Brookline. 14

In 1786 the great house was sold to Ebenezer White and then went to his son, John White. From him it was bought by Ebenezer Richards who turned it into a tavern. In 1783 a stage coach line of "unparalleled speed" had been inaugurated by which, according to its advertisement, a "merchant could leave Boston Monday morning and arrive in New York on Thursday evening." These coaches turned in at the Richards Tavern to change horses in the yard while the passengers refreshed themselves in the tap room.

Until 1810 the traffic continued to pass the front steps, following the ancient trail of the Indians. Then a great innovation came about when the Worcester Turnpike was opened. The new turnpike, which here came close to Sherburne Road, passed to the rear of the tavern. A gate was thrown across the turnpike at this point and a toll of 25 cents was collected from each carriage. This brought plenty of

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The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was
 a warm, humid breeze. It felt like a giant hand reaching out to
 greet me. I took a deep breath and felt the sun on my face.
 The air was thick with the scent of tropical flowers and the
 distant sound of waves crashing against rocks. I looked down
 at my feet, which were still in the shoes I had worn for
 so long. They felt like old friends, but I knew it was time
 to say goodbye. I took a step forward, feeling the sand
 beneath my feet. It was soft and warm, like a giant's foot.
 I looked up and saw the ocean stretching out before me.
 The water was a deep, vibrant blue, and the horizon line
 was perfectly straight. I felt a sense of peace and
 tranquility that I had never experienced before. I closed
 my eyes and let the sun kiss my skin. The world around
 me seemed to melt away, leaving only the sound of the waves
 and the warmth of the sun. I opened my eyes and saw the
 sun dipping below the horizon, painting the sky in shades
 of orange and pink. The water reflected the colors, creating
 a beautiful mirror image. I stood there for a moment,
 feeling the sand between my toes and the warmth of the sun.
 It was a perfect moment, a moment I would never forget.
 I turned around and saw the car parked just a few feet
 away. I walked back to it, feeling a sense of relief. I
 opened the door and got in, feeling the cool air of the car.
 I looked out the window and saw the ocean still there, but
 now it was a different ocean. It was a new world, a new
 adventure. I smiled and drove away, feeling the wind in my
 hair and the sun on my face. The world was my oyster, and
 I was ready to explore it.

patronage to the old tavern, not only from the travellers but also from parties driving out from Boston bent on a good time. Here they dined, danced, and tried their luck at the game of nine pins on the well-kept lawn. The tavern became quite noted for these parties.

In the 1830's, when it became apparent that the railroad, then being built between Boston and Worcester, would take much of the traffic from the turnpike, the building was discontinued as a hotel. The turnpike became little used and in poor repair until 1903 when the Boston and Worcester street railroad began operating the Worcester car line.

The Richard Tavern was afterwards owned by Henry Pettee and later by Mark W. Sheafe from whom it was bought in 1853 by William Fegan who occupied it till 1880. Mr. Fegan took great pride in his lawn which took on the smooth greenness of the old nine pin days. It became surrounded by three-decker wooden apartments, but still preserved something of the dignity of colonial days. Mr. Fegan's son helped to remove the old toll gate, and when the old tavern was pulled down in 1928 an ancient pulpit was found stored away in the cellar - a relic of the days before the Revolution when Deacon Elhanan Winchester held meetings for the New Lights.

There were two other taverns of somewhat less importance in Brookline:

The Reservoir Hotel located on the south side of Beacon Street opposite Englewood Avenue near the present site of the Leyden Church. This was built some time before 1873 when it first appeared on the assessors' list. It was called the Simonds (or Symonds) in 1879. Purchased by the West End Land Company in 1887, it was probably torn down soon after that.

The Hawthorn Inn was located on Harvard Street near what is now Lawton Street. It was originally located on Parker Hill in Boston, and later ^{moved to} on the small hill, which was later levelled off, on Harvard Street near the Allston line. ^{in Brookline} There are photographs but no further data on both these Inns in the Brookline Public Library.

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